

Adm - 13.1 MFR

17 January 1972

DD/S&T/55-72

MEMORANDUM FOR: See Distribution

SUBJECT : "FYI -- Allegations and Answers" -
An Occasional Notice

ILLEGIB

1. Statements about Agency activities frequently appear in the press or become current around town. In many cases an Agency employee would be expected by his non-Agency friends and associates to know the background of the matter offhand and be able to clarify erroneous statements in both official and social conversations. This is not always the case, however. To make this possible, notices called "FYI -- Allegations and Answers" will be circulated if warranted.

2. Attached is the first issue in sufficient copies for your further distribution to the office and division level.



25X1

W. E. Colby

Executive Director-Comptroller

Attachment

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FYI -- ALLEGATIONS AND ANSWERS

January 1972

ALLEGATION:

A Congressman was quoted in the Washington Post on 27 December as saying, "What I know about Laos is that the CIA has done a pretty lousy job and has been ineffective."

DEVELOPMENT:

A former employee, Mr. Thomas F. McCoy, has offered a rebuttal to the Congressman. Although Mr. McCoy said that he has disagreed with U. S. involvement in Southeast Asia, he has used the phrase "spectacular success" in assessing the job assigned CIA in Laos. Parts of a letter which he wrote on the matter were published in the Washington Post on 11 January. Excerpts appear below.

"I spent 17 years as a CIA employee and left in early 1968 because of my basic opposition to United States involvement in Southeast Asia. My last four years in the Agency were totally involved with Asian affairs. My knowledge of what CIA has done and has not done are obviously more detailed than (Congressman) Montgomery's, but it seems to me that if he is going to make public statements, he should at least take into consideration facts which have been well publicized....

"In order to assess CIA performance in Laos it is necessary to know what it was asked to do.

"CIA involvement in Laos stems from the agreement by the USA, and other powers involved, to withdraw all foreign troops from Laos. The agreement was signed in 1962. It became apparent immediately thereafter that the North Vietnamese, in violation of the agreement, were continuing to send irregular forces and supplies to the Communist Pathet Lao. Their purpose was clear--to establish a Communist government in Vientiane which would allow the North Vietnamese free access to the portion of the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos and the road across central Laos to Thailand. The government of the United States decided to mount an operation to thwart the North Vietnamese purpose. Because the Geneva agreement precluded the use of U. S. military forces or advisers, CIA was designated as the executive agent to handle the training and support of the non-Communist Meo tribes who lived in and around the Plain of Jars. The Meo force was the only army in Laos capable of stopping the Pathet Lao (supported by the North Vietnamese) from quickly overrunning the Plain of Jars, which was essential to the Communist purpose.

"The point to remember here is that the decision to act was a U. S. Government decision; not one arrived at by CIA. I think the decision was wrong, just as I think almost every other decision with regard to our involvement in Indochina has been and continues to be wrong. That is not the point under discussion.

"The question is: What kind of job did CIA do with the task assigned it in Laos?

"The answer, based on any comparison with the U. S. military effort in Vietnam, would have to be: A spectacular success.

"My personal knowledge of the operation ended in mid-1967, the last time I visited Long Tieng, the seat of the headquarters of Gen. Vang Pao, the Meo leader. At that time there were roughly 35,000 Meo tribesmen under arms fighting daily with the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese irregulars. This force had been fighting successfully for five years and inasmuch as they held Long Tieng until a few days ago, continued for another four years to beat off a vastly superior Communist army. The CIA contingent supporting them in Laos and in Thailand did not exceed 40 Americans, plus a small air contingent which air-delivered supplies and personnel. Imagine 40 Americans in support of 35,000 friendly tribesmen....

"For eight years this ragtag force defended its areas of responsibility, protecting the backside of the South Vietnamese--with no U. S. troops fighting at their side, not to say in front of them as in Vietnam. They accomplished this with the support of a handful of Americans and with the loss of perhaps three or four American lives.

"Can anyone seriously suggest that this was a lousy job?..."

ANSWER:

The McCoy letter was not inspired by anyone in the Agency. It was not written on our initiative or with our approval. We present it to you, however, for your information.

ALLEGATION:

In Parade Magazine's Personality Parade of 9 January 1972, the magazine's Walter Scott said CIA uses political assassination as a weapon, specifically mentioning Operation Phoenix in Saigon.

ANSWER:

CIA does not engage in assassinations. Additionally, Operation Phoenix was not run by CIA. Mr. Colby has written the Editor of Parade and asked him to publish the following:

"In your issue of January 9th, one of Walter Scott's Personality Parade responses stated that CIA 'uses political assassination as a weapon' and that Operation Phoenix 'run by the CIA established a new high for U.S. political assassinations in Vietnam.' Since I have held responsible positions in CIA for many years and was also (during detached service from CIA) responsible for U.S. support to Operation Phoenix, I believe I am uniquely qualified to testify (as I have in public session under oath to Senate and House Committees) that:

a. CIA does not and has not used political assassination as a weapon.

b. Operation Phoenix was run not by the CIA but by the Government of Vietnam, with the support of the CORDS element of the U.S. Military Assistance Command in coordination with several U.S. agencies including CIA.

c. Operation Phoenix is not and was not a program of assassination. It countered the Viet Cong apparatus attempting to overthrow the Government of Vietnam by targetting its leaders. Wherever possible, these were apprehended or invited to defect, but a substantial number were killed in firefights during military operations or resisting capture. There is a vast difference in kind, not merely in degree, between these combat casualties (even including the few abuses which occurred) and the victims of the Viet Cong's systematic campaign of terrorism to which Mr. Scott quite accurately referred.

In order to clarify this important question to the millions of concerned Americans who read Parade, I should appreciate your publishing this letter."

NOTE: The above factual answers are for employee guidance should the matters mentioned come up during official or social conversations.